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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001572

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [CG](#) [MONUC](#)

SUBJECT: SERIOUS SITUATION IN EASTERN CONGO THREATENS
REGIONAL PEACE

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Inflammatory rhetoric from Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC, coupled with the buildup of Burundian and Rwandan troops on the Congolese border and discord and disarray within one of the major parties in the Congolese transition threaten the fragile peace of the Great Lakes. South Africa is trying to broker talks between the RCD and the President's group, focused on relieving internal Congolese pressures and drawing a blueprint for saving the transition. However, in terms of deterring an outbreak of fighting, the Congolese are looking to the international community, and the U.S. in particular. The situation is salvageable, but a prompt, forceful and coordinated diplomatic intervention -- along the lines of that which helped defuse the Bukavu crisis -- is urgently needed. End Summary.

Looking Over the Gunbarrel

12. (C) Monuc Bukavu reports at least three brigades of Burundian troops poised near the border crossing at Uvira, and has confirmed the presence of at least two battalions of Rwandan RDF forces co-mingling with the FAB at that same site. Monuc also has forwarded to us reports of additional RDF forces (three brigades) on barracks alert. In response to the buildup the Congolese military has deployed a brigade to the Uvira area, although the regional military commander admitted privately to Monuc that he doubted that the FADRC forces could long oppose a determined effort to cross the border. Monuc and NGO sources report a buildup of military elements (Hutu local defense forces and/or RDF elements) in and near Minova, Kalehe, Dutu and other small villages near the lake -- all areas known as strongholds of rebel leader Nkunda. In Goma itself, three non-Banyamulenge military officers have been strangled to death (reportedly by Nkunda's men) in the last day. Nkunda himself arrived in Goma August 20 in what one observer called "a triumphal entry," accompanied by five truckloads of soldiers.

Political Machinations

13. (C) RCD-G VP Ruberwa, who remains in Goma with a significant number of RCD ministers and some parliamentarians, reportedly has issued a call for all RCD members to come to Goma immediately, to take part in an announcement planned for this weekend. An all-night meeting of RCD members at party headquarters in Kinshasa, apparently to "vote" on going to Goma, came as a surprise to moderates, who had not been informed that the meeting was to take place. (Further details septel.) A rupture in the party seems likely, almost certainly along ethnic lines. The key question remains, however, whether Ruberwa himself will resign from the government and announce (with or without legal authority) that the RCD is no longer part of the transition. We understand from RCD and government sources that S. African President Mbeki has summoned RCD and government elements for a meeting in Pretoria, to try to defuse tensions and salvage the transition by providing a blueprint for forward momentum. Although Ruberwa himself remains in Goma, RCD sources say that at least two party hard-liners have gone to S. Africa. The government appears still to be deciding who will represent them.

Comment

14. (C) We appear to be facing a major threat to the transition government -- still our best, albeit flawed, means of getting to democratic elections -- as well as a resumption of broader armed conflict in the region. The S. African initiative is helpful, but a broader diplomatic effort, such as that launched during the first Bukavu crisis, is urgently needed to remind all three parties to the current tense situation that they would face a high cost for allowing peace to fail.

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